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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the role of identity within the radical democratic traditions, specifically the categories known as citizens and worker. The progressive coalition aimed at countering classism, racism, ethnic and gender injustices, homophobia and misogyny must seek an axis around which to organize the diversity of humankind. Retaining the citizen-worker designation as a possible unifying membership that is compatible with current identity politics is suggested. The paper carries the examination of social class into the realm of teacher education and sees the reality of classroom achievement as an indicator of its influence on society. (EH)

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# The Complexly Constructed Citizen-Worker: Her/His Centrality to the Struggle for Radical Democratic Politics and Education

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## Introduction

Let us consider how certain ascribed, resisted, and constructed identities such as race/ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation interact with human categories that predate the recent eruptions which have been called the politics of identity, or the new social groups. Within the radical democratic traditions, these categories are known as citizen and worker. The first refers to how one relates to government and civil society; whereas, the second refers to one's relationships to the political economy as paid or unpaid labor. It is well-known that the radical democratic project from Rousseau through the democratic Marxists has been criticized for neglecting the importance of race, gender, and sexual orientation; furthermore, many have argued that any meaningful collective movement committed to democratic empowerment, social justice, and respect for diversity will have to be broad and inclusive if it is to succeed; therefore, we must construct a collective agency that is both diverse and focused. I will argue that this progressive coalition aimed at countering classism, racism, ethnic and gender injustices—as well as homophobia and misogyny—must seek an axis around which to organize the wonderful diversity of humankind. My theoretical and empirical axis (or magnet) is anchored by citizens and workers; however, they are obviously raced, gendered, etc. I offer this complexly constructed agency not as a Trojan Horse for the continued privileging of the white males central to Rousseau's citizen and Marx's worker, but instead to retain the citizen-worker as a possible unifying membership that is compatible with current identity politics.

## The Formation of Social Class

With Ellen Meiksins Wood I am convinced that the best opportunity to construct oppositional, progressive, radical and democratic politics points in the direction of continuing to define the specificities of capitalism-as-a-system of social relations and as a political terrain. We must stress history—and in some cases genealogy—rather than teleology or the wildness of a pluralism that recognizes neither structure nor causality. Recognition of material or structural limitations on human agency can provide a sober caveat concerning the limits of what human beings can accomplish even when armed by theory, self-awareness, solidarity, resoluteness, discipline and bravery. It is obvious that this recognition and possible agency takes our

relationships to the political economy seriously. This, in turn, makes social class an important factor in socioeconomic, political and educational justice. There is yet another important factor, as Wood has written, "the original critique of capitalism could not have been conducted without the conviction that alternatives were possible; furthermore, the original was carried out from the vantage point of capitalism's antithesis, socialism. This demanded a critique not only of capitalism or political economy but also of the available *oppositions* to capitalism which meant subjecting the socialist tradition ... to ... scrutiny. The principal object of this critique was to transform the socialist idea from an unhistorical aspiration into a political programme grounded in the historical conditions of capitalism. My own point of orientation is still socialism, but today's oppositions and resistances are of a different kind and require a 'critique' of their own. If there is now any single unifying theme among the various fragmented oppositions, it is the aspiration to *democracy*."[1] The historicity of capitalism means that it is contestable; moreover, the demos must be central to any successful agency: an agency comprised of classed citizens as a possible axis/magnet around which to organize the transformation I favor. The argument must be made once again that democracy is worth less in a mostly de jure nose-counting sense than in a de facto and bona fide participatory one that is built upon socioeconomic justice.[2]

Social class has been thought of in terms of structural *locations* and/or social *relations*. The first conception suggests geology and structure, whereas the second emphasizes dynamic relations (agency) between appropriators and producers. In order to get beyond the troublesome and unnecessary dichotomy between structure and agency, it is helpful to realize that the dominant modes of (not just material) production have established some forms of homogeneity on social formation; in fact, one can say that allocations of "objective positions," or locations, are experienced by members of classes within these modes. However, they do not mechanistically/unproblematically cause class formation—and especially one's consciousness of class membership. E.P. Thompson's, *The Making of the English Working Class* (1968) presupposes that the relations of production "distribute" people into class locations and it is from there that conflicts of interest arise. The social relations that arise can result in struggle by those who experience this "distribution" because they must "handle" the situations in which they find

themselves. Wood asserts that "it is in this sense that class struggle precedes class. To say that exploitation is 'experienced in class ways and only thence give(s) rise to class formation' is to say ... that the conditions of exploitation, the relations of production, are objectively *there* to be experienced."[3] However, these objective determinations did not and do not now impose themselves upon dopes or inert matter but, instead, upon dialectically-affected, real, specific, and complex human beings. Men and women live and experience their (our) determinate situations within ensembles of social relations characterized by cultural memberships. It follows that "no structural definition of class can by itself resolve or explain the problem of class formation and that 'no model can give us what ought to be the "true" class formation for a certain "stage" of process' ... In order to experience things in 'class ways' people must be 'objectively distributed' into class situation; but this is the beginning, not the end of class formation."[4] In Wood's view, the main burden of a class theory—which is still Marxist—must be to demonstrate class-formation, agency, and reaction to structure, rather than to focus on class locations alone. Class formation must be seen within historical materialism, i.e., a materially structured human-historical process. Contestation shapes human experience in class ways because of our relationships to the means of production; however, not every struggle is an expression of fully developed class consciousness based on clearly visible formations. Social activists, who are theoretically aware, must help draw out and develop consciousness as class-situated people struggle.[5]

Michael Mann has stated that he finds it nonsensical to say "class is dead" in a world still characterized/dominated by capitalism. In his view, social class still means: (1) all individuals or households vis-à-vis their relationships to economic resources—including, of course, the means of production and (2) a collective with a marked impact on history. Mann's view of the working class "has linked the two, since the collective actor has been mostly composed of workers with a given economic position ... [viz.,] the manual workers. Nonetheless, the actual collective actor was both less and more than this, since it was only a subset of those manual workers yet it was also persons possessing additional social identities ... This rather 'impure' actor, defined by multiple identities, though centered on class, has ... played a major role on the world-historical stage in the twentieth century. Yet its role might have [been] even greater had it not possessed a

rather purer 'proletarian,' supposedly 'objective' self-image, deterring many workers and others from joining it.'"[6]

E.P. Thompson's theory of English working-class formation recognizes the continuity of earlier popular struggles in that country. Some have criticized him for allegedly minimizing the uniqueness/newness of the proletariat within industrial capitalism. He has been asked: What had been made and when? What role did the new order of capitalism (1790–1832) play in the making? If there is continuity in worker and democratic struggle what has capitalism done to that continuity; furthermore, what have the various Schumpeterian "gales of creative destruction" that have marked capitalist dynamism meant to struggles for subaltern freedom? Wood tells us that Thompson did think the emergence of the proletariat was of great significance; although, *within* the context of continuous struggle by workers against domination. In fact, the Industrial Revolution was a " 'catastrophic,' historical milestone, marked by the emergence of a class sufficiently new to appear as a 'fresh race of beings.'"[7] Obviously the current "gale of creative destruction" has given rise to profoundly different working conditions in the Western heartland of advanced capitalism. The Right's offensive has smashed the Keynesian accords that provided relatively high pay, good working conditions and benefits for millions of unionized workers; furthermore, the last decade of this century is characterized by the dramatic growth of jobs that are semi-skilled at best, low paying, without benefits, temporary and without organizational protection on worksites. Relatedly, the central government has been made to respond increasingly to the capitalist imperative rather than to the demands of democracy and social justice. These new workers are not Marx's proletariat in the nineteenth-century sense; however, their plight is serious—although they may not occupy a strategic site from which to pose a mortal danger to the regime of capital.[8]

Wood is convinced that "the underlying determinations affecting the developments of 1790–1832 were … the working out of capitalist modes of expropriation, the intensification this implied, and the structure of social relations, legal forms and political powers by which that exploitation was sustained."[9] Without claiming the English experience as a perfect explanation for the current capitalist offensive in the U.S. and elsewhere, I am arguing that so much of what dominates the news—e.g., the Gingrichite political "revolution"—makes little or no sense unless

seen in the context of "gales of creative destruction." Gingrichism and even Clintonism represent the political recognition that capitalism can no longer afford—or will not abide—a human face; therefore, we have both political parties of capitalism and neo-empire fighting about how best to dismantle the "welfare state." The ability of powerful people, groups and institutions to make news about important but arguably side-show occurrences makes it difficult for people without class-consciousness, Jamesonian maps and political organization to keep their eyes on the key occurrences—viz., the current gyrations of capital on an unprecedented global scale.

Stanley Aronowitz writes of capitalism as the name we call a system of production based on the domination of persons and nature; although, it "does not subsume all elements of social, political, and ideological relations ... [Therefore,] a new conception of the emancipatory project of which socialism has been the leading proposal must be articulated."[10] Thompson has also forwarded the idea of the subaltern working-class people as complex, proactive at times and deeply embedded in particular cultures. It is this complex group of historical people which attempted to free themselves through struggle, self- and class-consciousness. The making of the English working class is but one chapter in the long story of brave struggle and, therefore, relevant to other situations. People are both subject and object within lived experience and struggle; therefore, the stark dichotomy within which some Marxists claim as an unbridgeable chasm between subjective and objective positioning is as dangerous as the other famous dichotomy, viz., agency and structure. Those who have struggled for socioeconomic justice, political rights and the opportunity to live in dignity with themselves and their neighbors were obviously not just workers; they were implicated in the thickness of particular cultures; moreover, some of these historical combatants were not yet citizens enjoying political protection.

In early capitalism, the workers were brought together but stood in one-to-one direct relationship to particular capitalists who appropriated her or his surplus value; therefore, individual experiences of exploitation required reflection and understanding by the complex actors so that they might come to see the commonalities among them. Wood helps keep the door open to a concept of class that can be helpful for problems and possibilities facing us during the last years of the second millennium. "The connections and oppositions contained in the production process are the basis of

class; but the relationship among people occupying similar positions in the relations of production is not given directly by the process of production and appropriation. The links that connect the members of a class are not defined by the simple assertion that class is structurally determined by the relations of production. It still remains to be explained in what sense and through what mediations the relations of production establish connections among people who, even if they occupy similar positions in production relations, are not actually assembled [exactly that way] in the process of production and appropriation. ... The determining structural pressures of production relations could be demonstrated only as they worked themselves out in a historical process of class formation, and these pressures could be apprehended theoretically only by introducing the mediating concept of 'experience.' "[11]

Dewey's concept of experience is not different from the experience of which Wood writes. For Dewey, "experience, intelligence, and education are to be understood in terms of comparative mastery over problematic situations ... Knowledge can never be the direct grasp of reality because new occurrences must be placed into an antecedents—consequences continuum in order for experience to be meaningful for [s/]he who undergoes it. One must place what [s/]he undergoes into a broader and longer course of events; connecting what is already apparent to that which is not."[12] Dewey would understand that, although workers participate in production and appropriation, the complexities, conflicts and divisions generated by these occurrences do not present themselves to participants as class experiences per se. Class does not present itself to them/us so immediately. Or, as a student of Dewey might say it: "Knowledge is a function of association and communication; it depends upon tradition, ... methods and tools which are socially developed."[13]

As we have seen, we are not assembled only in classes; therefore, the determining pressures exerted on workers of all kinds by the various dominant modes of production (not just in factories) are neither easily recognized nor understood in the absence of reflection, insight, knowledge, discipline, as well as references to history, sociology, economics, politics, and philosophy. Moreover, knowledge is an outcome of action informed by theory. Ultimately, class formation and class consciousness must be referred to common experiences, i.e., "a lived



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experience of production relations ... [and] of the conflicts and struggles inherent in relations of exploitation. It is in the medium of this lived experience that social consciousness is shaped and with it the '*disposition* to *behave* as a class.' [However,] the complexity of the mechanism by which productions relations give rise to class is not to deny their determining pressure."[14] I am arguing that just because all too many contemporary persons do not understand the determining pressures under which they live, labor, struggle and recreate themselves, it does not follow that such determinations and structures are absent. Furthermore, these structural determinants *do not ensure* the emergence of class consciousness and collective action; however, recognition of commonalties as workers/producers/non-exploiters—people who have claims on citizen-political rights—could allow disparate people who are classed/raced/gendered to construct progressive, liberatory, collective projects that would make more possible the enhancement of our dignity as human beings.

## Complexly Constructed Identities, With A Little Help From Nancy Fraser

Nancy Fraser's analysis in "From Redistribution to Recognition: Dilemmas of Justice in a 'Post-Socialist' Age" is helpful to my project for constructing more complexly the citizen-worker I champion as the key to radical democratic agency. She endeavors to unite the bases of identity politics with the universalistic tradition of class-based socialism. In fact, Fraser

> contrasts the logic of an economics of redistribution with that of civic and cultural recognition. She argues that while socialism aimed to abolish the proletarian condition the new movements based on ethnicity, [race,] gender or sexual orientation often wish to maintain and assert a distinctive identity. In Fraser's view there are bound to be tensions between the politics of "difference" and the politics of equality. Yet ... each needs the other. Half-measures in the recognition of cultural identities, and in the redistribution of resources, may only reinforce a system of injustice, and in the long term may backfire on those they were intended to help. In a more radical programme, a deconstructive approach to identity, in which ... all views are altered, should be allied to a thoroughgoing process of redistribution.[15]

Fraser is correct to say that in the late twentieth century the struggle for recognition is becoming the paradigmatic form of political conflict; furthermore, these post-socialist conflicts replace social class with group identity such as nationality, ethnicity, race, gender, and sexuality. Although demands for recognition are coming to displace a politics for socioeconomic redistribution as the

supposed remedy for injustice, Fraser reminds us that such a shift is occurring on terrains characterized by increasing *material* inequality. She understands well that such inequality ranges from income through access to education and health care, and all the way to caloric intake and exposure to toxicity. Considering the growing inequality of people's lives around the world and the paradigmatic shift to a new political imaginary based on identity, difference, recognition, and cultural domination should we attribute the shift to what was once called false consciousness? Or, does the shift represent a long needed redress of "culture-blindness" within the older socialist imaginary? She seeks to occupy middle ground vis-à-vis these stark choices. Fraser is convinced that we must accomplish a new intellectual and practical task: "that of developing a *critical* theory of recognition, one which identifies and defends only those versions of the cultural politics of difference that can be coherently combined with the social politics of equality. In formulating this project, I assume that justice today requires both redistribution *and* recognition ... [We must learn] how to conceptualize cultural recognition and social equality in forms that support rather than undermine one another ... It also means theorizing the way in which economic disadvantage and cultural disrespect are ... entwined ... Then too, it requires clarifying the ... dilemmas that arise when we try to combat both these injustices simultaneously."[16]

Fraser deserves praise for insisting on redistribution (downward) as a key factor in making our society more humane and just; obviously, it is this insistence that has motivated the various Rightists to do battle against the Leftists who consider some form of rough material equality as the sine qua non to bona fide democracy. David Held argues supportively that democracy cannot permit certain persons and groups to remain in permanently disadvantaged positions. Commitment to democratic autonomy, access, and participation requires a commitment to reducing unfair advantages that some have had over those less fortunate. I read Held as asserting that,

> the scope of action must be limited for some, in certain respects, so that it can be justly enhanced for others. It is not as though present advantages have been gained [in most or any cases] through fair competition upon a level playing field. Held captures the spirit of a version of democracy that can be defended ... one that ... [hopefully] will prevail in the long run. "It can be said that a political system implicated deeply in the creation and reproduction of systematic inequalities of power, wealth, income and opportunities will rarely ... enjoy sustained legitimization by groups other than those whom it directly privileges. Or ... only a political order that places the transformations of those inequalities at its centre will enjoy legitimacy in the long run."[17]

Fraser understands that political economy and culture are imbricated and that justice requires both redistribution and recognition; nevertheless, for explanatory reasons she conceptually separates the two. Because socioeconomic injustice is rooted in the political economy, e.g., the expropriation of the fruits of one's labor, deprivation due to inadequate standard of living, etc., the remedies require restructuring along the lines of altering radically the division(s) of labor, revising and publicly controlling investment policies, redistribution of income, and access to key resources. Cultural injustice is grounded in what Fraser calls social patterns of representation, interpretation, and communication. Examples include: being made invisible, disrespected, etc.; therefore, remedies for cultural injustice require cultural-symbolic changes, i.e., different and better recognition of differences. Fraser is astute to suggest imbrication soon after her conceptual separation: cultural recognition is, in fact, a form of redistribution; furthermore, redistributive remedies presuppose a conception of recognition, e.g., the equal moral worth of all persons. Fraser is not afraid to face up to the difficulties inherent in attempting to remedy injustices that are in some important ways different from one another: socioeconomic injustice demands the abolition of economic conditions that support group specificity; however, recognition means to continue and/or enhance differentiation. The proletariat does not seek merely to cut a better deal but, instead, to overthrow capitalism that hopefully results in the abolition of classes, including the proletariat.[18] However, as we know, workers have struggled for better conditions more often than seeking to overthrow capitalism.

For Fraser the extremes on the conceptual continuum of redistribution and recognition remedies are class and despised sexuality; however, the gray areas are characterized by hybrid modes that suggest a combination of the injuries of class and sex—constructed as the despised Other. In her words: "Bivalent collectivities in sum may suffer both socioeconomic maldistribution and cultural misrecogniton in forms where neither of these injustices is an indirect effect of the other, but where both are primary and co-original. In that case, neither redistributive remedies alone nor recognition remedies alone will suffice. Bivalent collectivities need both."[19] Fraser thinks that gender and race are paradigmatic bivalent collectivities. Both are socially constructed

identities rather than the result of pure biological imperatives. For example, both play important roles with regard to the divisions and stratification within paid labor, as well as the division between paid and unpaid labor. In these times, the latter division is more indicative of gender experiences. There are gender- and race-specific modes of exploitation, marginalization and deprivation; therefore, in this sense, gender and race are endowed with certain social-class characteristics. Justice demands the smashing of current job-related divisions and injustices based on race and gender. Obviously, race and gender conceived of in biological terms cannot be abolished in the same way Marx's proletariat can; however, if the hostile/derogatory *constructions* of biological differences are what cause injustice, these *constructions* can and must be abolished as well.

For Fraser, gender is both a political-economic differentiation and a cultural-valuation one. The major factor of gender injustice is androcentrism. Injustices such as sexual assault and domestic violence are relatively independent of the political economy; therefore, they cannot be remedied by redistribution remedies alone. In fact, the logic of remedy is similar to that of respect for sexuality (thought of as different from gender in Fraser's view), namely, to give positive recognition to a devalued group. *Mutatis mutandis*, this applies to the bivalent difficulties and hoped for remedies experienced by people of color. The economy and the culture must be changed radically in both cases. Fraser asks if feminists and others who are committed to racial justice can fight effectively on both fronts.

She speaks of two broad approaches for remedying injustices that cut across the redistribution—recognition divide: (1) affirmation and (2) transformation. The first is a liberal response, whereas the second is a deconstructive socialist one. She accuses the liberals of seeking to correct inequitable outcomes without dealing with the underlying realities that cause the need to create the kind of welfarism that Rightists attack so effectively—albeit, cruelly. This is accompanied, in her view, by mainstream multiculturalism that attempts to gain acceptance of the constructed Other within the system as it is. Mainstream multiculturalism and all too many forms of identity politics leave unchanged not only the socioeconomic injustices caused by the political economy but also the binary gender and racial codes. The transformative socialist strategy seeks to

deconstruct the homo-hetero dichotomy as well as stark dichotomies between whites and people of color. In fact, this deconstructive strategy endeavors to destabilize all fixed sexual, social, and other identities that have been constructed by those with power vis-à-vis serviceable others. Fraser speaks favorably of "queer theory" in terms of its aim to get beyond gay identity and on to creating a society with gray area continuums which include more people within the parameters of acceptability. Acting tolerantly and patronizingly toward the gender and racial Other fails to problematize the tolerant patronizer's position; furthermore, it leads to a politics of backlash and resentment. Those who are treated as persons deemed irrevocably different—and allegedly worse—are never safe from those who wish to undo even a modicum of fair treatment and seek to return to blatant oppression. Those who are labeled as different usually become targets of those who consider themselves within the parameters of "normality."

Fraser criticizes liberal affirmative redistribution strategies for being limited to altering attitudinal discrimination instead of attacking the gendered and racial world of work. The failure to alter radically the deep structures that help cause gender and racial disadvantage make necessary continuous transfer payments to certain select groups, resulting in accusations made disturbingly popular recently by spokespersons for the political Right, as well as Democrats in the U.S. Conversely, the long-range goal of deconstructive feminism is to develop a culture without hierarchical constructs that serve to rank-order certain "Others" to the bottom of the list. In the place of this deconstruction, Fraser would have networks of "multiple intersecting differences that are demassified and shifting. This goal is consistent with transformative socialist-feminist redistribution. Deconstruction opposes ... sedimentation and congealing of gender differences that occurs in an unjustly gendered political economy. Its utopian image of a culture in which every new construction of identity and difference are freely elaborated and then ... deconstructed is only possible ... on the basis of rough social equality."[20] Fraser endorses socialism as a transformative remedy because it champions universal social-welfare programs; effective progressive taxation; macro-economic policies favoring full employment; a large well-funded public sector; significant public ownership; widespread participatory democracy and the uncoupling of basic consumption shares from employment alone. She is convinced that transformative strategies reduce

socioeconomic inequality without stigmatizing certain people as undeserving beneficiaries of other *people's labor and charity*. This kind of society provides the context from which reciprocity, solidarity, recognition, and distribution can all develop more fully and equitably.

Fraser knows that what she has offered to us is not easily achievable; however, she hopes that realization of the need for different remedies can serve to soften the conflicts between those who seek redistributive *and* recognition forms of justice simultaneously. After having presented her case for socialist economics in alliance with deconstructive cultural politics as the most effective way to deal with bivalent collectivities of gender and race, she admits that, when we realize that neither gender nor race are dichotomously separate from each other and/or neatly fenced off from sexuality, the complexities threaten to overwhelm us with regard to political solutions. Fraser reminds us that no one is a member of only one collectivity; rather, there are many coordinates of memberships and possible injustices that intersect with one another. Still, she hopes that the combination of socialism and deconstructionism best promotes the necessary task of broad coalition building. In her words, "the task is especially pressing today, given the multiplication of social antagonisms, the fissuring of social movements, the growing appeal of the Right ... In this context, the project of transforming the deep structures of both political economy and culture appears to be the one over-arching programmatic orientation capable of doing justice to all current struggles against injustice."[21]

**... And From Francis Fox Piven**

I think that Fraser helps move my project forward because she articulates well the complex situatedness of contemporary actors on the terrains of late capitalism and its postmodernist outer husk. The fact that her analysis deals with both cultural memberships and relationships to political economy makes her work highly relevant to my attempts to construct citizen-worker agency and her/his centrality to radical democratic politics and the necessary educational experiences involved in effective praxis. Francis Fox Piven explains well how the old Left's belief in capitalism's ironic creation of a universal class, the proletariat, that would inevitably overcome capitalism has been discredited by events—and non-events—since 1883. Instead of the rise of rational proletarian-democratic politics, globalizing capitalism is helping to unleash conflict along racial, ethnic,

gender, religious, and regional lines in many parts of the world. The old Left notion was "that the social structure of modern societies generated broad collectivities, bound together for political action by common interests, a common experience, and perhaps common visions of emancipation. Now ... those premises seem ... overshadowed by a stream of theorizing which emphasizes the fractured and evanescent nature of political identities constructed and reconstructed by actors more influenced by cultural orientations than by the constraints of socially structured class divisions ... [In fact,] the new intellectual fashion challenges the old confidence in class in favour of culture in its own right."[22] Piven sees the inevitability of identity politics because it appears to be rooted in attachments to groups that are common to our human experience. These attachments may reflect primordial needs for material survival as well as for recognition, community, etc. Unfortunately, this need of group belonging/collectively has all too often featured the construction of various Others; furthermore, these Others are often blamed for things that go wrong within society. As we have seen, Marx's proletariat was also marked by particularisms of maleness, whiteness, as well as other diverse European ethnic and religious identities; however, he and his followers hoped that commonalities could and would be hammered out by work experience and political struggle.

Although identity politics is understandable because of legitimate human needs, fears, and hopes, such a politics can be said to suffer from a terrible flaw. Piven argues that "class politics, at least in principle, promotes vertical cleavages, mobilizing people around axes which broadly correspond to hierarchies of power, and which promote challenges to these hierarchies. By contrast, identity politics fosters lateral cleavages which are unlikely to reflect fundamental conflicts over societal power and resources and ... may seal popular allegiance to the ruling classes that exploit them; popular politics based on identity is ... regularly exploited by elites ... [Furthermore,] identity politics makes people susceptible to the appeals of modern nationalism."[23] It is well-known that bosses everywhere have played various races, ethnic groups, religions, as well as men and women against each other. The road to a class politics committed to democracy and equity for all—in the long run—may, in many cases, pass through some forms of identity politics. This is especially true of group members whose experiences have made it difficult for many of them to think well of themselves. The construction of subaltern identities in defiance of hegemonic ones

usually requires an exaggerated outburst that is characterized by bravado. Perhaps one must go down this road in order to eventually feel enough confidence to join a more universal project, such as class politics. Obviously, such aggressive identity assertions cause backlashes to occur, e.g., the generation-long reaction against *legitimate* black demands and self-definition in the U.S. The same can be said, *mutatis mutandis*, with regard to the various progressive feminist struggles in this country and elsewhere.

Piven's analysis of identity politics has the important advantage resulting from her anchoring it to the dynamic gyrations of capitalism-as-a-system—a globalizing one. In the first place, the current capitalist expansion has weakened seriously the power of nation States. Secondly, economic restructuring has catastrophically eroded the power of organized labor. Lastly, there is occurring a dramatic increase of global migration as people are engaged in intensified competition over scarce goods. Piven points to the internecine warfare in the developing countries and offers a partial but important explanation in terms of neo-liberal credit policies resulting from the hamstringing of governments in the Third and (even former) Second (communist) Worlds. In her view the break-up of the former Yugoslavia and the resulting ethnic-religious wars are importantly caused by shock therapy imposed by the IMF. Piven does not overemphasize the unifying power of labor unions, "nevertheless, the promise of the labor movement was that class solidarity would override particularisms, and even that proletarian internationalism would override state patriotism. And in instance after instance, where the successful use of the strike power demanded it, labour did ... override the divisions of identity politics, even in the United States. Now that moderating influence has weakened."[24]

Presently, organized workers in the First World countries are forced to compete with those from areas only recently sucked into the vortex of globalizing capitalism. Furthermore, supra-national organizations created by capitalism can act with a free hand; threaten disinvestment or capital strike; narrow policy options of national governments; and even on democratic politics itself. Organized labor had learned how to deal somewhat effectively with the central States in their own countries; however, it has not yet figured out how to play defense against the latest offensive by capital. Because of titanic (and undemocratic) economic changes, the industries that best

supported working-class cultures are being destroyed. "At the same time, capitalist have launched a specifically political project to dismantle the institutional supports created by working-class politics, by ... slashing welfare state income and service protections which shielded workers from the market, and by discrediting Keynesian macro-economic political regulation."[25] The dangers inherent in capital's offensive—supported by various right-wing special issue concerns such as anti-gun control, prayer in schools, denunciation of homosexuals and lesbians, anti-abortion, etc.,—have dire consequences for the K-12 public school when one realizes the vulnerability of more than a few students to eroding family incomes, backlash against diversity recognition, and the strengthening of the institutional school's reproductive functions.

Paradoxically, as more and more people are being drawn into the orbit of capitalism's totalizing logic, the lived experiences of so many people around the globe are still characterized by ancient and venerable prejudices; furthermore, these prejudices are driven to feverish and murderous levels. In this time of massive border crossings the spectre of Babel threatens all of us who seek to rein in, transform, and eventually replace undemocratic capitalism. When people's experiences are chaotic and confusing—at a time when history is being made behind most of our backs—it is perhaps not surprising that the best accomplishments of reason, empiricism, attention to cause-and-effect as well as science understood in terms of respect for evidence and its hypothetical nature give way to explosions of irrationalities and new quest for certainties. The retreat by many postmodernist thinkers from the best of the Enlightenment traditions and accomplishments is perhaps not surprising, although unfortunate.[26]

Economic and cultural changes of unprecedented speed, depth, and breadth are causing great popular anxiety and anger. This is true in most of the "developed" societies in addition to those which are not. However, the mainstream analyses in the U.S. hardly mention social class and/or capitalism. "Instead, public anger has ... been routed into the familiar channels of identity politics, as issues like immigration, crime, and welfare, all code terms for Afro-American and Latino minorities (with welfare a code for evoking wanton women besides) dominate the political discussion ... Hemmed in by a politically mobilized and aggressive capitalist class, party leaders promulgate arguments which account for the felt problems of ordinary people by singling out the

Other ... The focus on welfare is a good illustration."[7] The Republican Party in the U.S. has been attempting to solidify tax and expenditure advantages for the well-off so that they will become invulnerable to democratic politics. Perhaps those passing through the difficulties of these times will come to realize that the various identities in this country are experiencing class war from above.

**Afterword**

There are some who may ask what the issues discussed herein have to do with teacher education. The historic emphasis in most teacher *training* programs has caused many educationists and their students to view their tasks as mostly methodological, "how-to," "hands-on," "practical," field-oriented, and clinical. It has been difficult to convince those who view teacher training and even teacher education as mostly about rushing "expertise" to practitioners "in the schools" that issues raised in this work are ultimately relevant to professional reflective practice. Social Foundations of Education professors have struggled to convince practitioners that seeing things holistically, systemically, theoretically, philosophically, historically, sociologically, politically—and especially: interpretively, critically, and normatively is crucial to teacher perspectives that are practical, in the bona fide sense. My own experience as a teacher of teachers has convinced me that most of my students are attracted to K-12 teaching because they want to "help kids." For the most part, they do commit themselves to learning how to do that. However, their approach is often based upon an assumption (not always conscious) that the societal and cultural contexts within which teaching and learning occur—or do not occur—are separate from the intramural focus they have chosen. In the instance that some of them come to realize the possibility of connections between intramural and extramural contexts, very few understand that there are opportunities to alter the socioeconomic and political realities. As teachers become more thoughtful about their practice, it often becomes apparent that there are many reasons for their inability to achieve with and for their students all that they had hoped. When human agency bumps-up against structure—and when it is realized by K-12 teachers and teacher educators that this has occurred—then this work may stand a better chance to be considered useful by our fellow education workers. Obviously, it will be up to them to decide what is to be done.

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## Endnotes

[1] Ellen Meiksins Wood, *Democracy Against Capitalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 11–12.

[2] William Greider has written that "the decayed condition of American democracy is difficult to grasp, not because the facts are secret, but because ... [they] are visible everywhere ... The things that Americans were taught and still wish to believe about self-government—the articles of civic faith we loosely call democracy—no longer seem to fit the present reality ... Behind the reassuring facade ... the substantive meaning of self-government has been hollowed out. What exists behind the formal shell is a systematic breakdown of the shared civic values we call democracy." *Who Will Tell The People: The Betrayal of American Democracy* (New York: A Touchstone Book-Simon & Schuster, 1992), 11.

[3] Wood, *Democracy Against Capitalism*, 80.

[4] Ibid., 80–81.

[5] Marcello Mastroianni plays "The Organizer" in the film by that name in which he, the radical intellectual, arrives in Torino, Italy, to help striking textile workers (men and women) develop their consciousness, understanding, tactics and overall struggle.

[6] Michael Mann, "Sources of Variation in Working-Class Movements in Twentieth-Century Europe," *New Left Review* 212 (July/August 1995): 53.

[7] Wood, *Democracy Against Capitalism*, 86.

[8] According to "Neil A. Palomba, a labor economist who is dean of ... [a] College of Business ... 'the future of labor unions in this country [is poor] ... They are past their heyday ... and may no longer have a role in our society.' ... Palomba said international markets are forcing wages down ... corporations and governments are downsizing their unionized workforces, and companies are hiring more temps ... and home-based workers ... If they strike, companies bring in replacement workers or shut the plants. Corporations could move jobs out of the country or totally automate ... Unions don't have ... much leverage.' " "Labor's Future: Bad Times Predicted: Editorial," *Labor News* 30, no. 8 (November 1995): 2.

[9] Wood, *Democracy Against Capitalism*, 89.

[10] Stanley Aronowitz, *The Crisis In Historical Materialism: Class, Politics and Culture in Marxist Theory* (South Hadley, MA: J.F. Bergin Publishers, Inc., 1981), 123.

[11] Wood, *Democracy Against Capitalism*, 95–96. Wood explains that Marx speaks of how workers *live* within objective structures—interacting with and changing the structures as well as themselves. These structures do something to our "lived lives" and that is why we have social classes and not just relations of production. It is our task at the *fin de* millennium to help clarify what the current structures do to classed, raced and gendered actors-workers. We must keep trying to discern where our complex agency bumps-up against structural boundaries and what we can do about the impediments to possibilities for more humane living. Obviously, the operation of confining and determining pressures are not just theoretical, but historical, and therefore empirical. Furthermore, collective power is necessary to counter and overcome these pressures.

[12] Richard A. Brosio, *The Relationship Between Dewey's Pedagogy to His Concept of Community*, Michigan Social Foundations of Education Monograph Series (Yellow), no. 4 (Ann Arbor: Malloy Lithoprinting, Inc., 1972), 30.

[13] Ibid., 32.

[14] Wood, *Democracy Against Capitalism*, 96.

[15] "Themes," *New Left Review*, no. 212 (July/August 1995): 1.

[16] Nancy Fraser, "From Redistribution to Recognition? Dilemmas of Justice in a 'Post-Socialist' Age," *New Left Review*, no. 212 (July/August 1995): 69.

[17] Richard A. Brosio, *A Radical Democratic Critique of Capitalist Education* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 1994), 432–34. The direct quote from Held can be found in his *Models of Democracy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987), 299.

[18] Michael Roberts has reminded us that, "rather than exalt the proletarian ... Marx argued that the essence of the worker was his or her material, historical role: *servitude*. Servitude, the 'essence' of the worker in a capitalist context, must be attacked or 'overcome.' " In fact, " 'the workers' attack on their essence as workers arrives at a moment when they are able to "go beyond," to discover a terrain of creation and joy.' " Both of these quotes are to be found in Roberts', "Rereading Marx and Nietzsche," *Rethinking Marxism* 8, no. 1 (Spring 1995): 110. I believe these passages can be understood better within the context of Marx's "species-being."

[19] Fraser, "From Redistribution to Recognition?", 78.

[20] Ibid., 90. Teresa Amott has explained how women are especially vulnerable to economic crises; importantly because of their double roles as principle family caregiver and within the paid labor sector. The hidden injuries of this double role are not easily quantifiable according to Amott; however, "perhaps ... because ... [subaltern] women have been so severely affected by the [current economic] crisis, forced to assume new burdens of work and responsibility but deprived of safety nets and guarantees ... [they] have been able to see ... more clearly than those whose privileges have insulated them from its worst effects. And, finally, perhaps it is the very diversity of women's experiences that has given them a vision of alternative possibilities that is richer, more pluralistic, and more democratic." *Caught In The Crisis: Women and the U.S. Economy Today* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1993), 141.

[21] Fraser, "From Redistribution to Recognition?", 93.

[22] Frances Fox Piven, "Globalizing Capitalism and the Rise of Identity Politics," *The Socialist Register* 1995, ed. Leo Panitch (London: The Merlin Press, 1995), 103.

[23] Ibid., 104–05.

[24] Ibid., 109.

[25] Ibid., 110.

[26] For a critique of postmodernist bashing of the Enlightenment project as well as its nineteenth and twentieth-century advocates, see Brosio, *A Radical Democratic Critique of Capitalist Education*, chapter thirteen, "The Challenge of Postmodernism to the Enlightenment and Its Democratic Legacy."

[27] Piven, "Globalizing Capitalism And The Rise Of Identity Politics," 113.

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